**TRIP TO KAZAKHSTAN - 9 DAYS**

Set off on an unforgettable odyssey through Kazakhstan, where each day promises enthralling discoveries and enriching experiences. Upon arrival, your adventure unfolds in Almaty, a vibrant city awaiting exploration. Beyond its bustling streets, venture to the picturesque Medeu Gorge, where the world's largest skating rink awaits amidst the majestic Tien Shan mountains. At Shymbulak ski resort, be captivated by a mesmerizing falcon show before embarking on an overnight train journey to Turkestan. Here, delve into the tapestry of history and spirituality that defines this ancient enclave. Then, continue your journey to discover the natural wonders of Kazakhstan, from the grandeur of Charyn Canyon to the tranquil beauty of Issyk Lake.

**Itinerary**

**Day 1. Departure from the UK**

Most flights from Europe to Kazakhstan are overnight, departing in the evening and arriving the following morning.

**Day 2. Arrival in Kazakhstan. Excursion in Almaty**

**Highlights: Panfilov park, Zenkov cathedral, WWII memorial complex, green bazaar, central mosque, Republic Square, Kok-Tube hill, cable car ride**

Upon your arrival in Almaty, our guide and driver will be waiting to greet you at the airport, ready to commence your city tour. Begin your exploration at Panfilov Park, named in honour of the 28 heroes who sacrificed their lives for the country's freedom and independence. Admire the Zenkov Cathedral, the city's oldest wooden structure, renowned for its construction without the use of any metal nails. Pay your respects at the Memorial Complex dedicated to World War Two, featuring an eternal flame. Continue your journey with a visit to the vibrant Green Bazaar, where you can shop for souvenirs, followed by a stop at the central Moslem mosque and Republic Square, home to three iconic symbols of Kazakhstan, including the Independence Obelisk.

After the city tour, ascend Kok-Tube hill to marvel at the breathtaking panorama of Almaty from the observation deck. Explore the winding paths of Kok-Tube Park at the base of the tallest TV tower in Kazakhstan, where you'll encounter the monument honouring the legendary Liverpool band, "The Beatles." Conclude your excursion with a scenic ride on the cable car back to the city centre before transferring to your hotel.

Overnight in Almaty. Lunch.

**Day 3. Almaty - Medeu - Shymbulak - Almaty**

**Highlights: Medeu gorge, Tien Shan mountains, Medeu skating rink, Shymbulak ski resort, falconry centre**

The excursion will commence with your guide and driver meeting you at your hotel in Almaty. Prepare for a journey beyond the city to the picturesque Medeu Gorge. Here, you'll encounter a colossal dam designed to shield the city from floods and mudflows originating from the peaks of the western Tien Shan mountains. Standing atop the dam, elevated at 1733 meters above sea level, you'll be treated to a breathtaking vista of "Medeu" - the world's largest skating rink, nestled amidst the stunning landscape of the Trans-Ili Alatau mountains. The journey continues with a cable car ride to the Shymbulak ski resort, culminating in the Bolshoi Talgar pass. Here, immerse yourself in the awe-inspiring panorama of the snow-capped Tien Shan peaks. After a leisurely stroll through Shymbulak, embark on a visit to the falconry centre for a mesmerising falcon show (closed Mondays and Tuesdays). Following the spectacle, transfer to the railway station for your departure from Almaty to Turkestan. Tentative train schedule (TBC): 20:35-13:21 (+1 day). Enjoy an overnight journey aboard the train.

Overnight aboard the train. Breakfast. Total driving distance 70 km (44 miles).

**Day 4. Turkestan**

**Highlights: Azret-Sultan state historical and cultural reserve, Khoja Ahmed Yasawi mausoleum, Turkestan necropolis, Hilvet Semi underground mosque, Otrar - an ancient oasis settlement, Arystan-Bab mausoleum, Hyzyr minaret, Kemekalgan village, “Adam and Eve” rock.**

Upon your arrival in Turkestan, immerse yourself in the rich heritage of the Azret-Sultan State Historical and Cultural Reserve, where the focal point is the magnificent Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Mausoleum. Delve into the spiritual ambiance of the Turkestan Necropolis and pay homage at the Hilvet Semi underground mosque, followed by a rejuvenating experience at a traditional hammam. Marvel at the remnants of the fortress wall and the gates of the old citadel as you journey through this historic enclave. The exploration continues in Otrar, an ancient oasis settlement steeped in history. Wander through the archaeological site and gain insights into the region's past at the local history museum. Pay your respects at the Mausoleum of Arystan-Bab, the esteemed teacher and spiritual guide of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. Visit the mausoleums of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's parents, Ibrahim-Ata and Kharashash-Ana, and behold the remnants of the old Hyzyr minaret. Embark on a captivating excursion to Kemekalgan village, where the iconic "Adam and Eve" rock awaits. Follow the footsteps of pilgrims as you endeavour to traverse the gap between the rocks, seeking forgiveness for your transgressions in this sacred space. Conclude your day with a delightful dinner and retire to your accommodations for a restful overnight stay at a hotel in Turkestan.

Overnight in Turkestan. Breakfast.

**Day 5. Turkestan - Shymkent**

**Highlights: scenic landscapes, Abay park, Museum of victims of political repression.**

Following breakfast, embark on a scenic drive to Shymkent. Upon your arrival in Shymkent, indulge in a brief city tour, where you'll explore the vibrant main squares and picturesque parks that adorn the urban landscape. We will also make a short stop at the Museum of Victims of Political Repression, offering insights into Kazakhstan's tumultuous past. After lunch we transfer you to the railway station for your departure from Shymkent to Almaty. Estimated train departure time (TBC): 19:35-06:38 (+1 day).

Overnight aboard the train. Breakfast. Total driving distance 170 km (106 miles).

**Day 6. Almaty (free time)**

**Highlights: a school visit, optional activities**

Upon your arrival at the railway station in Almaty, your guide and driver will be awaiting to welcome you and transfer you to your hotel. Once you've settled in, the remainder of the day is yours to enjoy at leisure, indulging in some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

Should you wish to immerse yourself further in the local culture and community, we're delighted to arrange a visit to a local school where you can meet with students and gain insights into the educational landscape of Almaty. Engage in meaningful exchanges, sharing experiences and learning from each other in an enriching cultural exchange. Alternatively, if you're in the mood for entertainment and recreation, we can organise a visit to a theatre for a captivating performance. Alternatively, we can arrange a friendly game of bowling, adding a dash of excitement to your evening. Whatever your preference may be, rest assured that we're dedicated to curating a memorable and enjoyable time during your stay in Almaty.

Overnight in Almaty. No included meals.

**Day 7. Almaty - Issyk Lake - Almaty**

**Highlights: Tian Shan mountains, Issyk lake.**

We'll depart from Almaty and embark on a scenic drive to Issyk Lake. En route, we'll make a noteworthy stop at the Tomb of the Golden Man, a revered symbol of Kazakhstan's rich history and cultural heritage. Continuing our journey, we'll ascend to an elevation of 1756 meters above sea level, traversing through the captivating landscape of the Natural Park and the majestic Tian Shan mountains. As we arrive at Issyk Lake, prepare to immerse yourself in the serene beauty of this Alpine wonder. Spend several unforgettable hours surrounded by the tranquillity of nature, admiring the breathtaking views of the Tian Shan Mountains, lush forests, and picturesque flower meadows. Enjoy some leisure time to explore the area at your own pace before we begin our journey back to Almaty in the afternoon.

Overnight in Almaty. Breakfast, lunch. Total driving distance 170 km (106 miles).

**Day 8. Almaty - Charyn Canyon - Almaty**

**Highlights: Charyn Canyon.**

Departure from the hotel to the majestic Charyn Canyon, nestled within the Charyn National Park along the Charyn River valley. The Charyn Canyon stands as a magnificent testament to nature's artistry, boasting a landscape sculpted over millions of years. Its reddish sedimentary rocks, aged over 10 million years, create a captivating desert foothill panorama. Strolling through the canyon presents an opportunity to marvel at its unique vistas. Among the highlights is the "Valley of Castles," stretching approximately 2 km in length and up to 80 meters in width. Concluding the canyon exploration, a descent to the tranquil banks of the Charyn River offers a moment of relaxation and refreshment. Afterward, return journey to Almaty.

Overnight in Almaty. Breakfast, lunch. Total driving distance 200 km (125 miles).

**Day 9. Almaty**

End of the programme. Airport transfer.

Breakfast.

**Included**

* Hotel accommodation 3\*\*\*
  + Almaty 4 nights - Holiday Inn Express Almaty 3\*
  + Turkestan 1 night - Khanaka 3\*
* Overnight train tickets 2nd class: Almaty - Turkestan, Shymkent - Almaty
* Meals according to the programme
* Local English-speaking guides
* Transport
* Entrance tickets to museums and tourist sites according to the programme
* One bottle of water per person per day
* Airport transfers

**Price**

Below is the estimated cost of the trip excluding flights. We can provide a detailed calculation based on the size of your group. The approximate cost of air tickets from the UK to Almaty is from £700 per person. The cost of air travel depends on your departure city and trip dates. Our company will assist with booking flights.

The cost per person in pounds sterling, taking into account free places and the number of participants in your group.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **10 people 2 free of charge** | **15 people ​2 free of charge** | **20 people ​2 free of charge** |
| £1,045 | £945 | £845 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **25 people 3 free of charge** | **30 people ​3 free of charge** | **40 people ​4 free of charge** |
| £775 | £745 | £675 |

**request a no-obligation quote**

<https://www.best-of-caucasus.co.uk/en/school-kazakhstan-9-days.html>

